

Connecticut Association of Independent Schools

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Written Testimony of
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Raised Bill No. 6558, An Act Concerning the Imposition of Service Fees by Municipalities

March 2, 2009
General Assembly's Finance Revenue & Bonding Committee

Good morning Senator Daily, Representative Staples, Senator Roraback, Representative Candelora and member of the Finance Committee, my name is Douglas Lyons, I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). CAIS respectfully opposes House Bill 6558, An Act Concerning the Imposition of Service Fees by Municipalities.

I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to this legislation on behalf of CAIS's 95 non-profit independent schools throughout Connecticut. These schools proudly service students from every town in our state. According to the most recent State Department of Education (SDE) data (2007/08 school year) 67,000 students from Connecticut families attend non-public schools. The parents of these students pay local property taxes which support the public school system which their children don't participate.

Connecticut's non-public schools provide the state of Connecticut significant tax relief when you consider the cost of educating these 67,000 students. According to the SDE the cost to educate students in Connecticut is \$12,515/pupil. Therefore, non-public schools save the state \$838.5 million during the 07/08 school year. In the 08/09 school year these schools saved the state approximately \$872.4 million considering a modest 2-percent growth in enrollment.

Addition the annual cost savings to the state would be close to one **billion** dollars a year if you were to consideration the cost of construction and maintenance of facilities to educated 67,000 students. Simply stated, the non-public school system in Connecticut is a tremendous financial asset to the state.

However, this asset far exceeds the annual billion dollar subsidy to the state in many other ways.

- Non-public schools (which include independent schools, Catholic and other denominational schools and secular non-affiliated schools) pride themselves on being institutional role models of the behaviors they promote in their students.
- These schools are good neighbors. They commonly offer facilities (auditoriums, playgrounds, playing fields, gymnasiums) and other resources for use by the greater community. They maintain their buildings and grounds in good (often beautiful) condition.

- The presence of these schools in a municipality has been shown to increase average property values, by offering families greater choice in schooling options.
- The schools stimulate the local economy. Parents who visit their children in Connecticut's boarding schools eat in local restaurants, stay in nearby hotels and shop in local stores.
- These schools provide jobs – good jobs with security and good benefits.
- Finally, these schools have historically been at the forefront of innovation in education, which has been freely and generously shared with public school colleagues.

The Connecticut Association of Independent Schools is proud of history, our community involvement and most of all our students that we are honored to educate. For the reasons stated above we most respectfully ask that you reject this legislation that jeopardizes the successful model that has been built to educate our students.

Please call upon me with any questions.